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## THE SPECTRE BRIDE.

Translated from the German.

HE Castle of Laurenstein, near the borders of Thuringia, stands upon the site of an ancient convent, which was destroyed and razed to the ground during the Hussite war. The goodly estate thereto belonging, reverting, in consequence, to Count von Orlamunda, was bestowed by him on a faithful retainer, who built himself a castle out of the ruins, and assumed the title of lord of Laurenstein.

It was soon manifest, however, that he was not to be allowed to enjoy the fruits of sacrilege in peace. The bones of the sainted nuns, that for centuries had lain quietly in the convent's gloomy burial vaults, were scandalized to the very marrow by the desecration of their ancient sanctuary, and before many nights had passed after the lord of Laurenstein first pillow'd his head in his new castle, they mustered up in arms, and raised a tremendous breeze through the halls. Gliding through the passages and chambers in long white trailing robes, flitting through the air like shadows without the whisper of a rustle, they contrived to set everything together by the ears. The chairs made fierce assaults upon the plethoric sofas; the tongs gave the shovel no peace till both fell down on the hearth together, dragging pans and kettles after them in one dire clatter. Doors sprang open and slammed to again, windows raised themselves and fell with a crash of glass, sending shudders and thrills to the heart of every startled sleeper. Not a soul dared to peep from under coverlet after the first affright. Even the cattle lowed piteously, and the horses, growing wild with terror, kicked their stalls to fragments in the effort to break away.

The good sisters kept up their ingenuous pranks until every soul in the castle, from master down to foot-boy, was well nigh bereft of sense and courage. No expense was spared by the lord of Laurenstein for the quieting of his perturbed household. Famous exorcists, brought from distant cities, used their utmost art, and exhausted every expedient that could be contrived; but all to no purpose. Spells were pronounced at which the whole realm of Belial was wont to quake; the thresholds were besprinkled with thrice conse-

crated water, from which ordinary demons would have scattered like flies before the house-maid's broom; yet these ghostly Amazons still remained obdurate and invincible, and defended their ancient title to the domain with such mortal vigor, that the bones of a famous saint of the opposite sex, on being scandalously brought into the sacred virginal precincts, sprang out of the reliquary and incontinently took to flight.

But at last a famous exorcist, who went through Germany spying out witches and relieving haunted houses, was so fortunate as to catch them napping one day, and immediately banned them down into their gloomy death-vaults again, where they might roll their skulls about, shake their ribs, and clatter their hard knuckles as loud as they pleased, but never more come out. The castle grew still, and after a little uneasy and chagrined rioting below, the nuns, as if tired, took a long seven years' sleep, when one restless spectre walked again out of the death-repose, and amused herself for a few days with the old pranks. Another seven years' rest succeeded, and again the spectre appeared as before. Every seven years, on the eve of All-souls Day, it came, as if to keep the old claim good and binding. But the inmates grew so accustomed to these periodical visitations, that though the castle was stiller than usual on that night, and the sheets somehow were drawn over the eyes, there was yet little apprehension that the apparition would do them any harm.

After the demise of the first lord of Laurenstein, the castle descended regularly to the first male heir, until the time of the Thirty Years' War, when the last twig of the family tree blossomed in a boy. He grew up fat and indolent, showing none of that dauntless vigor in war and in love which had distinguished his ancestors. The estate to which he succeeded yielded him a sufficient revenue, which, if he did not waste, he took no pains to increase. In one respect he was not slow to imitate his fathers—he married as soon as the castle became his own, and in due time was blessed with an heir; but, contrary to all precedent, it was a girl. It was a great disappointment—a mistake to be rectified next time; but that next time, though anxiously waited for, never arrived. The mother, upon whom the task of sustaining the ancient honor and hospitality of the household had de-

volved from the very first, was compelled to take upon herself the sole instruction of their daughter; for as the lord of Laurenstein increased in rotundity and weight of body, his mind grew sluggish, and so besotted, that he could think and talk of nothing in the world but of roastings, and bakings, and boilings. It may be easily guessed that in the whirl of domestic cares, Emilie was left much to the faithful nurture of old mother Nature; but that was surely no disadvantage. That quiet-working artist, never willing to trust her reputation to chance, and commonly atoning for every egregious mistake by some splendid masterpiece, combined the physical and mental qualities of the daughter in more refined proportions than those which made up the stupidity of the father. She was graceful, light of foot as of heart, with a sweet face not too gay for tears; and within she was as lovely as without. As her mother watched the unfolding of all those charms, her ambitious desires for the advancement of her family gradually rose to extremely high flights of fancy. A woman of determined though quiet will, her pride, scarcely observable in common life, showed itself most strongly in her worship of long genealogical scrolls. She held to the memory of her ancestors as the noblest ornament of her house, and thought no family ancient and noble enough to match its blood with hers in marriage with Emilie. However ardently the young sprigs of the neighborhood desired the sweet prize, the quick-witted mother was never at a loss for means to disappoint them all. She kept a strict, yet not painful nor even apparent watch over the maiden's heart; frustrated every attempt to smuggle in contraband articles; discouraged all auntly interference and speculation that seemed to hint at match-making, and, in short, brought up the young lady in a manner that taught all aspiring youths to keep their distance.

The heart of a young girl, before she breaks away from the mother's hand, is like a boat in smooth water, obeying the slightest touch on the tiller; but when the wind rises and the waves ruffle up, who shall control it? For awhile Emilie was content to walk in her mother's path. Her heart, still free, was open to every influence, and she waited quietly for the coming of the great prince, or, at least, for the count, who was to lay his honors at her feet. All meaner-born suitors, meanwhile, were shown out with the most

amazing indifference. But at length an event occurred which played the mischief with all these ambitious projects, and threw prince and count into the other scale.

Once during the Thirty Years' War, it chanced that Wallenstein's army went into winter quarters in the vicinity of Castle Laurenstein, and the lord of it was compelled, much against his will, to entertain a host of uninvited guests, who made a greater uproar through his halls than ever did the spectral nuns; and though they made no troublesome claim to the property, there were unfortunately no means of exorcising them off the premises. Finding there was no help for it, the Laurensteiners concluded to present a cheerful face to their self-invited friends, and do their best to keep them in good humor. Dinner parties and balls followed each other in dazzling rapidity, the mother presiding at the former, the daughter at the latter. The rough warriors were shamed by this splendid hospitality into better manners than they showed at first; they could not but honor a house so princely and magnificent, and castle and camp were always on the best of terms.

Among the young war gods in the tents were many a noble youth, whose face and bearing might well have turned the heart of Vulcan's spouse; but one there was who surpassed all the rest. He was a young officer, handsome, refined, courteous, full of pleasant talk, quick to please a lady, and yet, withal, no dandy, for he had a serious side, and the eyes that could cast a genial light when he chose, could grow stern under a gathered brow, and his hand, gentle in the dance, was terrible in battle. And oh, what a dancer was he! So graceful, so nimble, so light, and so unweared! Emilie, who had scorned so many, felt a strange, uncomprehended sensation stirring in her heart whenever she looked on the young officer. It moved her wonder, though, that instead of being addressed as "fair prince," or "fair count," he should be balled by and all, simply and familiarly, "Fair Fritz." She inquired of his brother officers, as farther acquaintance gave her the opportunity, concerning his family name and his ancestors, but not one of them could afford her any satisfaction in regard to either point. All praised him, however, as a brave and true man, one who knew his duty and performed it. His character was above reproach; but whether his father's was, no one could

say. He had rather confused notions himself in regard to his ancestors, like the famous Count Cagliostro, who, by his own account, was descended from more than twenty fathers and mothers. But all stories agreed on this point: Fritz, by his own merits, had risen from the ranks to a commission in the cavalry, and if no ill luck befell, was destined to win still greater honors in the service.

It could not be that the fair Fritz should long remain ignorant of Emilie's over-curious inquisitiveness. His friends thought to flatter him with the intelligence, adding all kinds of favorable surmises; and though, in decent modesty, he laughed at them for their pains, yet he was secretly delighted beyond all measure, for at first sight of her he had been surprised by a rapturous thrill at the heart, which unaccountably returned at every meeting.

There are no words so strong as that secret, mysterious something, by which two hearts learn to know each other, growing stronger and clearer every moment, from the first slight look to the sweet consummation. There was no open avowal of love; but Fritz and Emilie soon understood each other, for their looks, meeting half-way, said all that timid love dared or needed to discover. The inattentive mother, taken up with cares and pleasures, had neglected her watch over the daughter's heart, just at the very time when it would have been wisest to keep strict guard; and Love, ever vigilant, had taken advantage of the remissness to steal it one night. Once in firm possession, he taught the young lady a lesson quite the reverse of mamma's. Sworn enemy of all ceremony and pride, he taught his pupil in the very first that the sweetest of all passions brings all to the same level. Ancestral pride melted in her heart, like the frost work on a window-pane when the sun strikes through. Emilie not only pardoned her lover's want of an ancestry, but carried her democratic heresy so far, as to declare pride of birth and station to be the most intolerable yoke which men impose upon the freedom and happiness of loving souls.

Fritz worshipped Emilie with his whole heart; and having made the amazing discovery that love was at least quite as agreeable as war, made the best use of the first opportunity that offered, to make his heart known to her. She took his confession with sweet blushes, but could not,

in womanly truth, conceal her joy, and the betrothed souls exchanged vows of unfailing love. Happy were they in the present moment; but alas, they shuddered at the coming! The return of Spring was near, calling the soldiers to their tents. The lovers must separate, perhaps—who could tell?—forever. And now came earnest consultations, how to make love's bond of legal force, in order that nothing but death might ever come between their lives. Emilie had acquainted her lover with her mother's views in regard to a match for her, and it was not to be expected that the proud dame would abate a hair's breadth of her ambition to gratify so foolish a whim as love. A thousand plans were discussed and rejected, as rather endangering than likely to forward the success of their desires. But the young soldier, finding his betrothed ready for anything that promised a certain and happy result, at length proposed an elopement—love's favorite scheme for the circumventing the conceit and self-will of those parents whose wisdom has outgrown their own young feelings, and hardened into selfishness.

Emilie considered a little while, and then gave her consent. But now came a still more serious question. How was she to escape to her lover from the strong castle, with doors bolted and barred? She well knew that as soon as the camp broke up, her mother would return to her old habits of jealous watchfulness, with ten-fold rigor for her very remissness; not a moment could she feel herself free from spying eyes. Love's invention grows keen from difficulties: Emilie suddenly bethought her of All-soul's day, when the spectre-nun would make her periodical visit, and at once proposed to take advantage of the superstitious fear and quiet of that night to make her escape. She could prepare the traditional costume, and with a little help from a faithful maid, transform herself into such a spectre as few would dare to stop.

In raptures with his lady's daring and ingenuity, Fritz clapped his hands together, and then imprinted a fervent kiss on her forehead. Though there was much superstition prevailing in Germany at the time of the Thirty Years' War, he was philosopher enough to question the existence of ghosts, or, at least, to care very little about them any way; so he had no objection to the plan on the score of fear. This all happily arranged, he bade Emilie

good-by, and commanding himself to the protection of Love, rode to the field at the head of his troop. We need not follow him farther than to notice, that, though he shrunk from no dangers and honorable venturings, he passed through the campaign without a wound. Love seemed to regard his prayers.

Emilie, meanwhile, passed a life between fear and hope. Anxious and trembling for her lover, she was eager to learn every scrap of intelligence from the winter's guests, and was observed to be greatly moved on the arrival of news of battles and skirmishes. The mother, never suspecting the truth, set it down to tenderness of disposition, and Emilie was content she should. Her true soldier never failed to send her news of himself, from time to time, assurances of love, and accounts of his adventures in the field. This was done through a faithful waiting-maid of Emilie's, and Fritz of course received many letters from her by the same post. No sooner was he free for awhile, during an armistice, than he hastened to fulfill his part of the plan. Procuring a light open wagon, suited to a swift flight, and pretending that he was going off on a hunting excursion, he set out for Laurenstein in season to reach it on the appointed day. He was to wait at night in a grove near the castle.

All Soul's Day came at length. Feigning a slight indisposition, Emilie retired early to her room, where, with the assistance of her maid, she was soon transformed into the neatest little ghost that ever haunted a lady's chamber. She thought the evening hours went by most unconscionably slow; every moment added to her impatience. The moon came up, the lover's friend, throwing her yellow light on the castle walls. The sounds of busy life gradually died away; before long the only waking souls left were Emilie and her maid, and the watchman at the door. The great hound chained outside, now and then greeted the moon with his deep baying. At length it struck midnight, and Emilie, furnished with keys to all the doors, stole softly down the stairway into the hall. She rattled her keys, overthrew chairs and tables, opened cabinet doors with all the noise she could contrive to make, and passed through the portal without interference from man or beast. Watchman and hound shrunk in terror from the sight of her. She reached the chilly open air, and hastened with a quickened

heart to meet her lover in the grove. She could see him waiting for her in the shadow of the great trees.

Fritz had been punctual. His pulse throbbing with rapture, he stood waiting in the grove for the appearance of his mistress, and at midnight drew near, he stole towards the castle, still under cover of the wood. Scarcely had the hour struck, when he had the joy to see the fair nun open the door. Eagerly springing to her side he clasped her in his arms, saying in an earnest undertone: "I have thee now, my sweet! have thee forever! Never more shall we be parted! Thou art mine, love! and I am thine, heart and hand, forever!" He lifted the lovely burden into the carriage; the driver whipped up his horses, and away they went over the hills and through the valleys. Fritz thought the horses knew the errand they were on. They grew wild and almost furious in their speed, until the driver began to think that the devil was in them, or else behind, and before they had measured many miles he lost control of them altogether. It was a wild race! The horses snorted, threw up their tails, and sped along like mad. A wheel came off; carriage and all were thrown over a steep embankment, and all rolled down together, into a stony hollow. Fritz was unconscious for awhile, and on coming to his senses, found himself so bruised and battered that he could hardly stir a limb. Worst of all, not a trace could he discover of his bride. He called her name a hundred times, but received no answer. The remainder of the night was passed in a most miserable and bewildered condition of mind, and next morning he was found by some laborers and carried to the nearest village.

Ship and cargo were lost; his driver had broken his neck, but these were trifles to the doubt that hung over Emilie's fate. Fritz sent out men to search for her; but they came back without having met with the slightest token of her. It was until midnight that the mystery was solved. As the clock was striking the witching hour, the door of his chamber slowly opened, and the semblance of a nun glided in, to his horror and disgust, coming directly towards his bed. He felt it to be spectral; repeated all the prayers he could remember, crossed and blessed himself, and conjured the awful thing in the name of Mary and her Son; but it came close, and lay down beside him.

Chafing his brow with an ice-cold hand, it repeated the fatal words which had given it power to come there: "I am thine, thou art mine!" Fritz almost died with terror. The spectre remained until the clock struck one, and then glided away. He saw no more of it that night; but he was not rid of it, as he hoped, for it followed him to his camp.

But what of Emilie? Who can tell the anguish and despair of that gentle heart, when her lover was nowhere to be found? Surely that was the place and the hour; it was scarcely a quarter since the clock struck. Thinking he might have mistaken the spot, she searched the whole grove over and over, and yet not a trace of him. Perplexed, and at first thoroughly alarmed, she scarcely knew which way to turn. To fail of any rendezvous would be inexcusable in a lover, but in this case it was little short of high treason to love itself. Emilie found it incomprehensible, and after wandering so long, and lingering in the cold, damp air till she trembled like a leaf, and could restrain her tears no longer, she sat down on a stone, and gave way to bitter weeping. The tears relieved her; she felt her old pride coming back again, as if a spell that had been upon her had suddenly lost its potency, and she cried shame upon herself for stooping to love a man without a name, and only the pretension to noble feeling. The tumult of passion thus stilled, she resolved to return at once to the castle, and think no more of the false one. The first part was performed quickly and safely, much to the astonishment of her maid, and she was quickly smuggled back to her own chamber, without disturbing a single person; as for forgetting, we shall see.

We left Fritz in camp, whither he was followed by the spectral nun, who appeared to him every night, claiming the fulfillment of his word. He grew pale and melancholy, until every one in the regiment noticed it, and being a favorite with all, he was consequently subjected to a great deal of disagreeable sympathy and questioning. He was a riddle to them all, for how could he tell? But among his comrades there was an old soldier who had a reputation for skill in the black art, and it was said could raise or allay spirits at pleasure. Fritz was so constantly importuned by this old comrade to tell what it was that gnawed so grievously into his peace of mind, that at length the poor martyr to love and the platonic caresses

of the spectre nun, revealed the whole story to him, under a solemn promise of secrecy. "Nothing more than that, brother?" exclaimed the old soldier, "You shall soon be relieved. Follow me to my quarters." Fritz followed, wondering. His comrade drew a circle in his tent, traced mysterious characters within it, and stepping in with Fritz, began his conjuration. Soon a dark room appeared, with a gloomy light from a magic lamp, and in the midst of it appeared the spectre nun! The old soldier forthwith commanded her to confine her operations to a little brook meadow in a distant valley, and never to leave it this side of the day of doom. The spectre vanished.

Drawing a long breath of relief, Fritz watched the disappearance of the magic sight, rejoicing from the bottom of his heart that he was at last well rid of the tormenting ghost.

It was too late to return to Laurenstein; the armies were again in motion, and he must follow Wallenstein to the field. The course of war led him into distant countries, and three years passed before he could return to Bohemia. He had borne himself bravely in many a hard encounter, and had risen to the rank of Colonel. All this time he had not heard from Emilie. Perhaps he fancied he had forgot her. But on seeing the towers of Laurenstein in the distance, his old love came flashing back into his heart and face; and now the question was, had she forgotten him? He could not rest till he knew. Without giving his name, he gained entrance to the castle as an old family friend, just returned from the wars. The story need not be interrupted to describe Emilie's startled confusion when her lover appeared. Joy mantled her pale cheek, mixed with a sense of wrong done to her, of indignation and perplexity. She greeted him with coolness in her manner, which it cost her eyes a hard struggle not to undo. For more than three years she had been resolving to forget him, and yet ever keeping him in mind. His image was always fresh in her heart. The god of dreams seemed to take his part, for numberless were the visions she had of him, and, what was singular, every one was a vindication of him.

Colonel Fritz, (as we must call him now,) whose stately bearing was not without its effect on the keen glances of the mother, soon found an opportunity to talk with Emilie in private. He related the misadventure of the elopement night, and

she confessed the unhappy suspicions that had wounded her heart. The lovers made up with kisses and fresh vows, and concluded to extend their secret so as to let mamma into the circle. The good dame was no less astonished by the love-affair of the timid Emilie, than by the spectral facts of the attempted runaway, but concluded that love, after such hard proofs, deserved its own reward, she only objected to her lover, that he had no family nor name. She had nothing to say, however, to Emilie's answer, that it was more reasonable to marry a man without a name, than a name without a man; and no prince or count forthcoming, she at length gave her consent. "Fair Fritz" embraced his charming bride; the marriage passed off with little splendor but much happiness, and without any claim being made upon the bridegroom by the Spectre Nun.—*Boston Journal.*

#### LETTER FROM ITALY.

##### A HOLY FETE.



E have before us a letter, written originally for a Philadelphia paper, which, though not relating to Art, is yet so highly descriptive of other things to be seen, in this day of novelties, in the country of art-shrines and art-treasures, that we are induced to lay it before our readers, to tell its own story:

FLORENCE, April 4, 1858.—I have just returned from Prato, where I have seen the most astonishing performance which probably this nineteenth century of advancement and enlightenment can show to any one. To begin at the beginning, Prato is an ancient walled town of twelve thousand souls, on the line of the Maria Antonia railway, and eleven miles from Florence; here every three years, on Good Friday at least, twenty thousand good and bad Catholics, and about all the indifferent Protestants sojourning and traveling in Tuscany, go to see "La processione del Cristo Redentoro," which is in fact the funeral of Christ the Redeemer, as the priests think it ought to have been, and not as it was. We, that is another indifferent Protestant, and myself, went to the station in time for the five o'clock train; found the gates shut and some thousand

of the washed and unwashed outside waiting to get in, and (as railway carriages here are not like ours, of India-rubber, and made to contain an indefinite number,) having rather a hopeless time of it. The legitimate quantity for the train were already inside, engaged in admiring the struggles of a very small engine with a mile or two of empty cars, and smiling compassionately at the efforts of the crowd waiting admittance. We, however, with prophetic eye, had foreseen the difficulty, and provided ourselves with tickets the day before; on showing them to the bearded warrior in waiting, he opened the gates and we passed in, to the utter dismay of those we left behind, The little engine finally succeeding in its efforts, off we went at a very moderate pace indeed.

We had picked up a friend, the son of a Signore Thomas, an English director of the road, who, as you will see, was a great comfort to us, and proved himself a man of might and authority, though he stood but five feet two in his high-heeled boots. In our carriage were three specimens of the *Civis Britannicus*: a male and two females; the former in the usual sack-cloth suit worn by this species when traveling, the latter in flat hats, standing shirt collars, many ringlets, confined by the obsolete side-combs, high-lows (very stout) and one petticoat of a carnation hue. We being dark and bearded men, they took us for aborigines, understanding alone our own vernacular, and therefore conversed together with much freedom on the discomfort of Tuscany in general, the infamy of priests, the fleas, and "how those Italian men smelt of garlic," all, you perceive, strictly national subjects. We had spoken the lingua Toscana to help the delusion, but the last remark was too much for the offspring of the Signore Tommaso, who immediately exclaimed, "Cheesy idea, that, George!" This exclamation carried utter confusion into their cockney bosoms, and their embarrassment was most refreshing to look upon. They tried to conciliate by an offer of John Murray, but we refused to be appeased, until the sack-cloth suit produced the pipe of peace, whereat we thawed, and smoked, and the side combs took just a trifle of snuff (having had the gripe), and we all talked and made merry, and found, as is often the case, that there were very good oysters in very ugly shells; and they found we did speak English, and didn't eat garlic, and